

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the Application.

1. **(Twice Amended)** A computerized method of comparing proper names, comprising the steps of:

obtaining text data representing a first proper name [that designates an entity] and a second proper name;

classifying the text data representing said first proper name into one or more predetermined classifications;

converting the text data representing said first proper name to one or more representations of said first proper name in a phonetic alphabet using rules associated with said one or more predetermined classifications;

converting the text data representing said [and] second proper name[s] to [first and second pronunciation equivalent] at least one predetermined representation in said phonetic alphabet [representations, equivalent to at least respective portions of said first and second names];

comparing the one or more representations of said first proper name and [second pronunciation equivalent] said at least one predetermined representation of said second proper name [phonetic alphabet representations] to determine a likelihood of match between [that] said first and second proper names [also designates the entity]; and

producing a signal indicating said likelihood of match [that said second name designates the entity].

2. **(Twice Amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein the [said] data representing said first proper name and said second proper name is obtained as a string of characters.

3. **(Amended)** The method of claim 1 wherein said phonetic alphabet [representation] is an International Phonetic Alphabet [representation].

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4. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said one or more predetermined classifications [including the further step of processing at least one of said first and second names to assign to said at least one of said first and second names one of a set of categories of likely] correspond to one or more ethnic origins of said at least one of said first and second proper names, and wherein the step of comparing [said comparison of said first and second phonetic alphabet representations] is performed according to an algorithm that varies depending on the corresponding one or more [said assigned category of likely] ethnic origins.

5. (Amended) The method of claim 4 wherein said algorithm compares different portions of said [pronunciation equivalent phonetic alphabet] representations in said phonetic alphabet depending on the corresponding one or more [said assigned category of likely] ethnic origins.

6. (Amended) The method of claim 4 wherein said algorithm ignores certain portions of said [pronunciation equivalent phonetic alphabet] representations in said phonetic alphabet in the comparison, depending on the corresponding one or more [said assigned category of likely] ethnic origins.

7-12. Cancel.

13. (Twice Amended) A name processing and matching system comprising:  
a database including [containing] a plurality of proper names and records associated respectively with said proper names, wherein each one of said proper names represents an entity;

database processing means associated with said database for creating, for each of said plurality of proper names, a plurality of [pronunciation equivalent] phonetic alphabet representations of at least a portion of said proper names [using a phonetic alphabet];

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input receiving means for receiving text data representing an input proper name, wherein the text data representing the input proper name[s] is received as a string of characters;

classification means for classifying the text data representing the input proper name into one or more predetermined classifications;

phonetic processing means associated with said classification [input receiving] means for creating one or more [a pronunciation equivalent] phonetic alphabet representations of the input proper name for each of said one or more predetermined classifications [representation of at least a portion of said input proper name using said phonetic alphabet];

comparison means associated with said database processing means, said classification means and said phonetic processing means for comparing the one or more [said pronunciation equivalent] phonetic alphabet representations of the [said] input proper name to said plurality of predetermined [pronunciation equivalent] phonetic alphabet representations [of said proper names] to determine, for each of said proper names, a likelihood that the [said] input proper name represents the same entity as said proper name; and

output means associated with said comparison means for eliminating as potential matches of those records associated with a proper name for which the likelihood that the [said] input proper name represents the entity represented by said proper name falls below a predetermined threshold, and for processing the records remaining after said eliminating function as potential matches for said input proper name.

14. **(Previously Amended)** The system of claim 13 wherein each of said plurality of proper names consists of a string of characters.

15. **(Previously Amended)** The system of claim 13 wherein said phonetic alphabet is an International Phonetic alphabet.

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16. (Twice Amended) The system of claim 13 further comprising name classifying means for processing the [said] input proper name to assign one of a set of categories of likely ethnic origin of the [said] input proper name, wherein said comparison means comprises variable processing means for performing said comparison of the one or more [said pronunciation equivalent] phonetic alphabet representations of the [said] input proper name to said plurality of predetermined pronunciation equivalent [phonetic alphabet] representations of said proper names according to an algorithm that varies depending on said one or more predetermined classifications corresponding to a [assigned category of] likely ethnic origin.

17. (Twice Amended) The system of claim 16 wherein said variable processing means compares different portions of the one or more [said pronunciation equivalent] phonetic alphabet representations of the [said] input proper name to said plurality of predetermined [pronunciation equivalent] phonetic alphabet representations of said proper names, depending on said one or more predetermined classifications corresponding to a [said assigned category of] likely ethnic origin.

18. (Amended) The system of claim 16 wherein said variable processing means ignores portions of the one or more [said pronunciation equivalent] phonetic alphabet representations of the [said] input proper name in the comparison, depending on said one or more predetermined classifications corresponding to a [assigned category of] likely ethnic origin.

19. (Twice Amended) A method for retrieving information from a database based on an input of a proper name, comprising the steps of:

identifying apparent surnames and given names that are part of a string of characters that represent the proper name;

determining the cultural origin or ethnicity of the [inputted] proper name based on at least one of said apparent surnames or said given names;

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selecting a search strategy based on the determined cultural origin or ethnicity of the proper name;

selecting a set of names [that are stored in] from the database, wherein the selection is based on a culture-relevant key-indexing strategy; and

using an algorithm tailored according to the selected search strategy to evaluate which of the selected set of names match the proper name, wherein the search strategy corresponds to matching [pronunciation equivalent] phonetic alphabet representations of each of the inputted proper name to [pronunciation equivalent] phonetic alphabet representations of the selected set of names [stored in] from the database.

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**20. Cancel.**

*D2*  
**21. (New) A method of comparing proper names comprising:**

providing a plurality of predetermined representations of one or more candidate proper names in a phonetic alphabet;

receiving a proper name as text data;

classifying at least a portion of said received proper name into one or more predetermined classifications;

converting at least a portion of said received proper name to one or more representations of at least a portion of said received proper name in a phonetic alphabet based on rules associated with said one or more predetermined classifications;

comparing each of said one or more representations with each of said plurality of predetermined representations; and

determining a similarity measure for each of said one or more representations with each of said plurality of predetermined representations.

**22. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein said classifying said received proper name into one or more predetermined classifications comprises determining whether a measure of an ability of each of said one or more predetermined classifications to render said received proper name exceeds a pre-determined threshold.**

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23. (New) A computerized method of comparing proper names comprising:  
receiving text data representing a proper name;  
receiving text data representing one or more candidate proper names;  
classifying at least a portion of said proper name into one or more predetermined classifications;  
converting at least a portion of said text data representing said proper name into one or more representations in a phonetic alphabet based on rules associated with said one or more predetermined classifications;  
comparing said one or more representations of said proper name in the phonetic alphabet with each of one or more representations of said one or more candidate proper names in the phonetic alphabet to determine a likelihood of match between said proper name and each of said one or more candidate proper names; and  
producing a signal indicative of said likelihood of match.
24. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein the phonetic alphabet is an International Phonetic Alphabet.
25. (New) The method of claim 23, wherein said one or more predetermined classifications correspond to one or more predetermined cultural classifications.
26. (New) The method of claim 25, wherein said comparing said one or more representations of said proper name in the phonetic alphabet with each of one or more representations of said one or more candidate proper names in the phonetic alphabet comprises using an algorithm that varies depending on said one or more predetermined cultural classifications.
27. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein said algorithm compares different portions of said representations in the phonetic alphabet of said proper name and said candidate proper names depending on said one or more predetermined cultural classifications.

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28. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein said algorithm ignores certain portions of said representations in the phonetic alphabet of said proper name and said candidate proper names depending on said one or more predetermined cultural classifications.

29. (New) The method of claim 23, further comprising converting said text data representing said one or more candidate proper names into one or more representations in a phonetic alphabet based on rules associated with said one or more predetermined classifications.

30. (New) A computerized method of comparing a proper name with a plurality of candidate proper names comprising:

receiving text data representing the proper name including at least one surname and at least one given name;

classifying at least one of said at least one surname and at least one given name into one or more predetermined classifications;

converting at least a portion of said received text data representing the proper name into one or more representations of the proper name in an International Phonetic Alphabet based on rules associated with said one or more predetermined classifications;

determining a measure of similarity between each of said one or more representations of the proper name and each of said one or more representations of the plurality of candidate proper names; and

outputting said measures of similarity.